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ABSTRACT

Teaching about moral issues is discussed in this transcript of "Options in Education," an electronic weekly magazine. Directed toward educators and students, the program covers news, features, policy, and people in the field of education and is available for broadcasting to member stations of National Public Radio. Seventeen montages deal with values clarification, morality, moral dilemmas, alienation, secular humanism, and controversial curriculum materials. Discussants include students, teachers, professors, school board members, authors, and directors of national associations including the National Education Association, the Street Law Program, the National Right to Life Movement, and Planned Parenthood. Subjects that are dramatized focus on the right to lie and steal under extreme conditions, the appropriateness of transmitting moral values through public education, values clarification versus traditional American values, teacher values versus student values, conflict between parental and societal values, teaching sex education in school, and controversial textbooks. (Author/DB)

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TRANSCRIPT FOR PROGRAM SCHEDULED FOR BROADCAST
THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 13

Program No. 44

SO

SP009640

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OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is an electronic weekly magazine devoted to coverage of news, features, policy & people in the field of education. The program is available for broadcast to the 185 member stations of National Public Radio.

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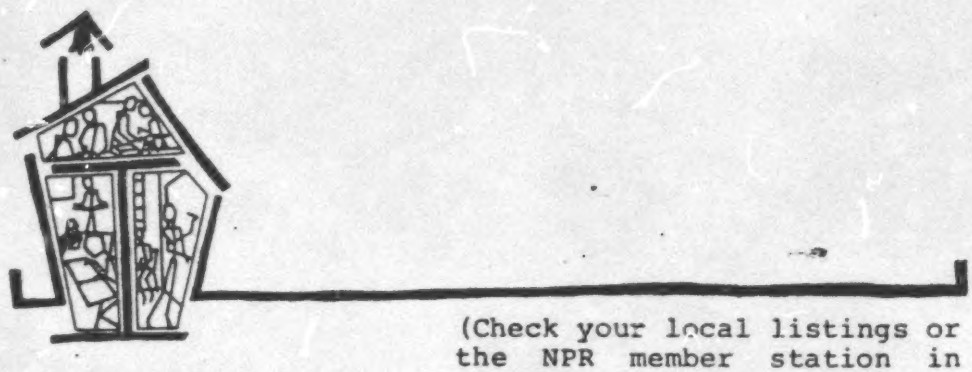

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MORAL EDUCATION

Program No. 44

(OPENING MUSICAL THEME)

(BELL RINGING)

MERROW: If you've ever been to school, stay tuned.

BLAIR: We've got something that will interest you. I'm Wendy Blair.

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. And this is OPTIONS IN EDUCATION.

(MUSIC)

STUDENT: Well, some people don't need or want a moral education, and I don't think it's the university's responsibility to provide this.

GUERSTER: I do feel that sex education in the public schools is weighted.

LEWIS: These textbooks, as hideous as many people thought they were, really were very sane. But there is something basic to the American experience that has its roots in religion.

(MUSIC - PIANO)

MERROW: Is it ever right to steal?

WEBER: Well, my personal belief is "no."

(MUSIC - PIANO)

MERROW: I'm John Merrow. Is it ever right to lie -- to steal? Suppose your children were starving, you'd steal food then, wouldn't you? I certainly would. Some teachers are asking questions like that in their classes -- classes in something called "Values Clarification." But many parents object. They say values should be taught at home, or in the church. Others object to the idea of clarifying, which implies examining alternative values in order to choose which ones to accept. Those parents think schools are causing doubt and uncertainty in their children's minds.

LINDBERG: Right is always right. Wrong is always wrong. There is very little gray area. That's one of the reasons why there's such a strong interest in the the McGuffey Readers and why there's such a strong interest in my book, The Annotated McGuffey.

MERROW: Dr. Stanley Lindberg's book describes selections from the McGuffey Eclectic Readers, the most famous school books in America. The books were used by 80% of American school children from 1836 to 1920. Over 122 million copies were printed. In fact, the books never went out of print. Stanley Lindberg explains what's in the McGuffey Readers to reporter Doug Drew of Station WOUB in Athens, Ohio.

STANLEY LINDBERG

LINDBERG: Most of the lessons do have a very clear moral point. If you do something good, you're rewarded, not only with the promise of a heavenly reward, but usually with some kind of tangible benefits. A young man does something good, and he is rewarded, usually by being hired by someone quite wealthy and then, inheriting that wealth and becoming very, very successful. In contrast, if someone does something bad, and the villains of the McGuffey stories are often marvelously named. One in particular that I think of is named Jack Pilfer, and Jack Pilfer steals some oranges and is kicked by the horse. He's taking them from a basket on the side of the horse, and he's kicked by the horse. And as he lies writhing in agony on the ground, everyone rushes out to see what has happened and no one helps him, because he was rightly served.

One passage that's, I think, quite representative of the morality in the McGuffey's is one entitled "Things to Remember":

"Things to Remember"

> Remember that God made all creatures to be happy and will do nothing that may prevent their being so without good reason for it. When you are at the table, do not eat in a greedy manner like a pig. Eat quietly, and do not reach forth with your hand for the food, but ask someone to help you. Do not become peevish and pout because you do not get a part of everything. Be satisfied with what is given you. Avoid a pouting face, angry looks and angry words. Do not slam the doors. Go quietly up and down stairs, and never make a loud noise about the house. Be kind and gentle in your manners, not like the howling winter storm, but like the bright summer morning. Do always as your parents bid you. Obey them with a ready mind and with a pleasant face. Never do anything that you would be afraid or ashamed that your parents should know. Remember -- if no one else sees you, God does, from whom you cannot hide even your most secret thought.

And it goes on like this. I suppose I could read more, but it's quite an interesting collection of morality, religion, and manners. And some of these things come out of left field. You're being told to remember God, and the next thing you're told is do not slam the doors. In some respects, you could say that the McGuffey Readers helped in a large way to form what we now call "middle America," the "values of middle America." I am not advocating a return to the McGuffey Readers. I'm not saying that we should burn the current textbooks and go back to McGuffey. I'm saying these books had a tremendous impact on our culture, and they deserve some attention. They will help explain what we are, in part, today.

MERROW: Stanley Lindberg, author of The Annotated McGuffey, talking with Doug Drew of Station WOUB, Athens, Ohio.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: The days when everyone agreed on what lessons schools should teach are gone. One modern criticism of the McGuffey Readers is that the values they teach are those of a white, Christian, middle-class society -- and perhaps we have become, or always were, more complex and diverse than that. For some, the argument is not whether schools should teach values, but which values to teach. John Ryor, President of the National Education Association, told me teachers often are not aware of their own values

JOHN RYOR

RYOR: I think whenever we teach some value is transmitted. I think you can't help but reveal in large part what you are as a teacher when you're dealing with students.

MERROW: Well, if schools can't help but teach values -- teachers have values, and they can't help but transmit them -- who decides what values are taught in our public schools.

RYOR: Let's go a little further than that. I think they've always taught them. I think they have, in some incidences, transmitted values they never intended to teach. The way you communicate with your students transmits a great deal, whether you have respect for their opinions, or for an opinion different from your own. I think one of the major problems that we're facing with value education in public school systems and certainly with the massive value confusion that exists in society today is that most adults, including teachers, don't really know much about sorting out their own values, and have really never taken the time to identify what those values are.

You couple that with what I believe to be the de-educating nature of two other pieces of the social setting -- the family unit and the church -- who are always a major piece of that value or moral education with the schools. Now, I think by and large those two pieces have abdicated responsibility in many, many areas, not every place, certainly. And I think, consequently, a great deal of that responsibility has been left at the doorstep of public education.

MERROW: So, the public schools must do something just by default, you're saying?

RYOR: I think they must. I think any time the public schools are confronted with a major social question, a major problem, they must either deal with it, or the problem consumes them.

MERROW: Okay, but you have certain religious values that you hold dear. I assume that you would like your children to arrive at those conclusions. Do you want your kids in public school to be discussing whether or not those are worth holding to?

RYOR: I don't think it's the school's function to say to the kid, "All right, it's time for you to re-examine all of that -- your folks may be wrong." I think what it is the responsibility of the schools to do is to help children learn about the process of valuing.

MERROW: Why shouldn't the schools just teach reading, writing and arithmetic, and stay out of the rest?

RYOR: The concept of reading, writing and arithmetic as the sole function of the schools is something that really hasn't existed since

the forties. The fact of the matter is our society has changed. What was adequate in an agrarian function in the one-room school house and described as reading, writing and arithmetizing, if you will, I think simply does not meet the needs of an educated decision maker in today's society.

MERROW: John Ryor, President of the National Education Association. Ryor suggested that students will talk about their values anyway, and that schools and teachers really cannot avoid moral questions.

(MUSIC)

COX: Do you think it's ever right to tell a lie?

PROFESSOR: I myself feel that as long as we know what we mean by a lie, that it would have to be related to the intent. Truth is not a simple concept.

PROFESSOR: I guess I could be very moralistic and say, "No, it's never right to tell a lie," but I'd probably be very hypocritical.

MERROW: Two college faculty members in Washington, D.C., responding to Tim Cox's questions. Morality is a complex issue. Maybe the question should not be how values are taught, but when. Should it wait until high school or college, or will values already be formed in children by then? George Weber, the Associate Director of the Council for Basic Education, holds strong views on the subject of "Values Clarification."

GEORGE WEBER

WEBER: "Values Clarification" is meaningful only if you look at the programs that bear that name. Almost all parents would regard those programs as unacceptable invasions of the family's privacy. Those programs ask such questions as "Do you think you're treated well by your parents? If no, why? Does your mother go with men other than your father?" Now, you may laugh, but you see many of the so-called "values clarification" actually ask "Is it ever right to steal?" Well, a lot of parents would object to that, because they say you are actually implanting doubt in young, impressionable children's minds about a value we're trying, and the church is trying, to instill in them. If the teacher has a belief that runs counter to the accepted belief in the community, let's say, about sex, and maybe it's the New York teacher who goes into West Virginia. Now, if you have that teacher teaching with a free reign, you'll find that teacher raising questions about sexual relationships, which may be taken perfectly for granted in New York, but will scandalize West Virginia.

MERROW: You mentioned the teacher raising the question about honesty and whether it was ever right to steal. Let me ask you -- is it ever right to steal?

WEBER: Well, my personal belief is "no," and I would teach my children that.

MERROW: Suppose your wife is critically ill and may die, there is a drug which might save her. However, that drug is illegal. The

doctor would not allow you to use it, but you thought you could steal it and thereby have an opportunity to perhaps save your wife's life -- would you steal the drug?

WEBER: I'd rather not answer a question like that, because, let me tell you, you have done exactly what the "values clarification" people do. These people are trying to tear down traditional values in our country. And they use these very rare cases in an attempt to tear down the devotion to certain fundamental traditional values that many of our people have.

MERROW: You've indicated that you do not agree with some of Professor Kolhberg's stages of moral development.

WEBER: I'm not convinced that it proceeds the way he says it proceeds, and the experimentation that he's done and other people have done using his principles have not panned out. One of the things he comes up with is the idea that the way to do this is to put people in a similated situation and let them behave any way they want to, and learn by the natural consequences. This is a very artificial thing -- it doesn't work in many cases. I just would not recommend that as a strategy for doing what might be done in his field.

Another approach that some people have suggested is to have students study our laws and our legal system, not so much in terms of this is what the laws says, and if you violate the law you can be spanked in one way or another. But, rather, to look at the legal system and say these are the rules that our society has for social behavior, and to study why they have these rules and what are the ramifications of them.

MERROW: George Weber, Associate Director of the Council for Basic Education in Washington. Weber is sceptical of the theories of moral development put forth by Professor Lawrence Kohlberg of Harvard. Professor Kolhberg is a leading exponent of "values clarification." He believes that there are six identifiable stages of moral development through which we grow. The circumstances of our lives determine how far along we get in our moral development. That is, only the best of us advance to the sixth stage. Kolhberg's theories are being put into practice in new curricula around the country. In this classroom, students are role playing -- that is, pretending to be unhappily married.

MALE STUDENT: But that does not take away the fact that I caught you sleeping with another man.

FEMALE STUDENT: You would never know, would you? If you . . .

MALE STUDENT: That's not the point. If you were a woman with scruples, if you were a woman with some moral background, you would not have done that.

FEMALE STUDENT: If I had more attention paid to me by my husband, who came home and had his head in his papers all the time -- what am I supposed to do, sit around? Yes, dear, I'll wait.

MALE STUDENT: That's part of my job.

FEMALE STUDENT: Well, what about when you come home -- you're supposed to leave your job at your job. What about when you come home on the weekends?

MALE STUDENT: Who's going to provide for the kids unless I have a job?

FEMALE STUDENT: What about weekends? I mean, you didn't work on weekends? You're always in the den with the door locked, doing work. I mean, once in a while, come eat dinner with us sometime -- anything. The kids are beginning to wonder who you are -- who's that man that lives in the den?

MALE STUDENT: I was doing it for you and the kids.

FEMALE STUDENT: Sure, sure.

MALE STUDENT: So, that's your reason. That justifies sleeping with someone else.

FEMALE STUDENT: Yes -- neglected wife. That's what I was -- mental cruelty -- almost physical cruelty. I have witnesses, you know. The neighbors heard everything. You know that.

MALE STUDENT: Right, you were making enough noise to wake up the block.

MERROW: High school students in a "Street Law" course sponsored by Georgetown University Law School in Washington, D.C.

O'BRIEN: Every person, every juvenile and adult in the United States needs what we call "legal literacy."

MERROW: Edward O'Brien, the Director of the "Street Law" program, believes it's teaching values. He explains to Joan Friedenberg.

EDWARD O'BRIEN

O'BRIEN: This is part of their moral education, in that they focus on their own values as human beings in our society. The way this works, I think, is that you take a real-life situation, like a landlord/tenant situation, and you put a student in it in a role-playing type exercise in which the student is a tenant and another student is a landlord. Students by doing this will focus in on their own attitudes about the legal system. They'll begin to decide whether or not the legal system can be used to their advantage.

If we expose them to a lot of different types of techniques, such as one of Kolhberg's dilemmas that deals with criminal law, for example, we teach students about the crime of petty larceny. Kolhberg has developed a very good strategy in which it tells about students in a department store stealing something, and it focuses on whether or not the other student should, in fact, squeal on the one that has stolen the goods. And I think by teaching them not only that larceny

is a crime and what the elements of that crime are, teaching them what the police do in our society, and how that works, and then, throwing in one of these kind of moral dilemmas, we can give a student a very well-rounded education, both in "legal literacy" and in moral reasoning.

We also have a prison program, which also is interesting from the point of view of moral education. It is funded by an LEA grant where we are setting up programs this fall in the State of Washington, and in the States of Colorado and California, in the prisons there, where law students go into the prisons and teach the same kind of course, hopefully with the idea that not only will the inmates in the institutions learn some law that will be helpful to themselves and their families in their everyday life, but also that they'll come out with a more positive attitude towards law, the legal system, and society.

MERROW: Edward O'Brien, the Director of the "Street Law" program, talking to Reporter Joan Friedenberg.

Georgetown's "Street Law" program uses some of Professor Kolhberg's examples of moral dilemmas. That is, situations in which two deeply held values actually conflict, forcing one to choose between them. One of Kolhberg's examples involves the dying wife and the illegal drug: Should the husband steal the illegal drug in order to save his wife's life? Kolhberg studied the responses of sixty ten-year-old boys to that question over a twenty year period.

LAWRENCE KOLHBERG

KOLHBERG: Let me use just one kid who we followed over time. He was ten years old when I started the study, and when I presented him with the issue of whether the husband should steal the drug, he said, "Well, he shouldn't steal the drug. If he steals the drug, he might get put in jail and have to put the drug back." That is, his reasoning at that time was based entirely, or his reasons were entirely in terms of obedience to rules and law as a way of avoiding punishment. When we re-interviewed him three years later, he had moved to the next stage. He said, for instance, at that time, that he should steal the drug. He had changed his mind to saving the wife's life. He said, "He might get sent to jail, but he'd still have his wife." So, at that point, his thinking appealed to the husband's instrumental interest. He no longer had a blind fear of punishment and power, but he was concerned about what was best for him, in some sort of way of rational calculation.

Three years later he moved on to what we call the third stage. At that stage, he said, for instance, "I would have stolen the drug for my wife -- you can't put a price on love -- you can't put a price on life, either." So, now he no longer thinks instrumentally, just in terms of what we would ordinarily call shared moral values -- love, and the value of life, and so on. But it's still not a concern in terms of moral principles, which only comes much later.

The next stage in this six stage sequence that we found, this particular subject didn't reach it until his mid-twenties, at which point he reached the fourth stage called the "law and society maintaining stage." At that point, for instance, he said, in answer to the question, "I have obligations to my country, my wife, my family, and my religion. To my wife, there's not only love, but obligation. We've committed ourselves before God in the contract of marriage." So now, he's moved from simply being concerned about

being nice and being a good husband in the sense of loving your wife and so on to concern about some moral rules and contracts which are defined in terms of the welfare of society as a whole, or a total moral order, which in this case includes a religious order.

The fifth stage is really the moral basis of our democratic constitutional society. It is one that only about twenty percent of our subjects have reached, one in which reality is understood to rest on a social contract involving some respect for certain universal human rights.

There's a higher sixth stage which I won't go into, since it's reached by so few adults. Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King expressed this sixth stage form of thinking and orientation to universal ethical principles, going beyond even law and social contract and recognition of the rights of others.

But given that there were such stages, the question comes up of are there things the school could do about it. The original group of sixty boys that I started out with in Chicago were each ten. At that time, they were almost all either stage one or stage two. Now, as adults, they range from stage two to stage five, some bordering on stage six. In other words, the sequence of development is the same for everybody. How far people get in their moral development varies a great deal, and our study showed that a lot of it depended not on anything like heredity or even intelligence, or anything like that, but under the kind of social conditions under which the child grew up.

MERROW: Professor Lawrence Kolhberg of Harvard, describing his six stages of moral development. If you're like me, you're probably trying to figure out which stage you're in now. I've concluded that sometimes I'm in stage one -- simple childlike respect for authority, sometimes stage two -- back scratching, and sometimes maybe even stage five -- the social contract or putting the values of society ahead of my own desires. I haven't any idea how Professor Kolhberg would classify me.

(MUSIC)

TEACHER: All of you have been reading this dilemma as I came in the room. Somebody tell me what it's all about -- Peter?

STUDENT: Sharon and Jill are friends and are going into a department store. They're shopping around, and Jill sees a sweater that she really likes, and she doesn't have enough money, I guess, to buy it. So, she goes into the dressing room and puts it on underneath her coat, and then walks out. And so, Sharon knew that she had done this, and Jill had left the store, and the manager and officer walked over and questioned Sharon as to what the other girl's name was. And she said she wasn't sure if she should tell them the name or not. It's just not right for somebody to take the rap for somebody who has run away.

TEACHER: Don't you have an obligation to a friend in a situation like that? They're best friends.

STUDENT: Yea, fine, you know, but if I see somebody who just leaves me in the store, for these people to come up and say, "Well, you were aiding a shoplifter," I'm certainly not going to turn around and say, "Oh, good friend, I will save you."

TEACHER: What's going to happen to all of us if everyone lies whenever they feel like it, whenever it suits their convenience? What kind of a life are we going to have?

STUDENT: If everybody goes around shoplifting, like, let's say, somebody goes and steals a whole bunch of things from somebody's store, then you go back to your store, and you see everything from your store is missing -- do you know what type of life that'd be? Everybody would just be walking around stealing everybody else's stuff.

TEACHER: Let's look over on the board for a minute at should and should not reasons. The first reason the should nots have is friendship. And I asked you just to stop there and explain orally what you mean by friendship. What about it? Mary Jo?

STUDENT: Well, the thing is, a person matters more than a rule, and that you have somebody's friendship. The rules are right -- the rules are upstanding; when you need them they're there, you know. The thing is, all right, you got to go by them most of the time, but you've got a friend. And I don't know, I always would value a lot higher a friend and somebody, you know, who I could talk to, a lot higher than a sweater, than something material. You know, there's just absolutely no comparison between emotion and material things.

(MUSIC)

MERROW: Those students in Cambridge, Massachusetts are discussing another Kolhberg moral dilemma. That same approach is being used in a peer counseling program in Miami.

WHITE: An issue is brought out at the beginning of the session -- stealing, for instance.

ENSOR: Do you have a lot of troubled youngsters around here?

WHITE: This is the sixth largest school system in the nation, and so we probably have more than our share for that reason.

MERROW: As we said, many school districts have courses based on "values clarification." Dade County, Florida instituted such courses in an attempt to reduce student violence and drug use. Curriculum Director Richard White explains to NPR Reporter David Ensor.

DAVID WHITE

WHITE: Our intent was to help kids to deal with the alienation and the kinds of things that they're confronted with, that lead them to drug-related activities, and to establish a value system that does not require the use of drugs -- you know, mood modifying substances. It's been expanded since then to include a rather extensive activity program that requires some kind of intellectual discipline -- karate, transcendental meditation, even chess -- anything like that might be an activity program and is carried out. And there will be a variety of them going on at every school.

There have been citizen groups that have raised questions about the propriety of it. And when it was explained exactly what the program consisted of, the protests died down - and it's now on kind of a sporadic basis. We have some teachers trained to teach the science of creative intelligence, and where there is enough student interest, those courses are still carried out in our schools.

MERROW: Dade County Curriculum Director Richard White, talking with Reporter David Ensor. There are others in the business of "values clarification" besides the disciples of Harvard Professor Kolhberg or Professor Sidney Simon of the University of Massachusetts. The Educational Research Council of Cleveland, Ohio wants to help schools teach values. The ERC was organized in 1959 to give businessmen a greater influence over education. The council's main project today is a social science and economics program. Founder George Baird says this course is designed to show that the free enterprise system is best. ERC claims that its curriculum materials now reach 22 million school children, out of a total of 49 million in the country. Some of ERC's financial support comes from the business community. Rachael Kranz of member station KSJN in St. Paul, Minnesota has this report.

KRANZ: "Which of the following historical episodes seem to show a contradiction between values and actions? Mark your answers with an X.

"Robespierre and the Jacobins proclaimed liberty, equality and fraternity -- brotherhood -- as the highest values. They executed thousands of persons in the 'reign of terror.'

"Abraham Lincoln said that it was his highest duty as the President to preserve the Union. He led the North to war against the seceding southern states.

"Karl Marx said that all history was the history of class wars. He said that the moral values of a society were made by the ruling class, so that the ruling class could exploit the lower classes. For this reason, Communists will use force and lies and treachery to overthrow Capitalist ruling classes and Capitalist states."

Those are some of the questions from the ERC's sixth grade test, which is given to 12-year-olds after they have been in the ERC program since kindergarten. ERC is a program that goes from kindergarten to eighth grade, and it reaches some 22 out of the 49 million elementary school students in the country. That's about 40 percent. Twenty million of those students participate in ERC's social science programs.

Elaine Wrisley of ERC says that the program is heavily laden with facts, but it has more than facts. It has concepts. Questions like the ones about Marx and Lincoln are designed to teach

children to think and, in some cases, to reach certain conclusions. When asked about the values ERC is trying to instill, Wrisley and others use vague terms like "honor" and "loyalty." But the group also describes its values as "conservative and opposed to liberalism, socialism, and communism."

Wrisley admits that some children or their parents may not agree with the values espoused in the ERC program. But she says that the program makes it possible for the children to examine many different kinds of approaches.

ELAINE WRISLEY

WRISLEY: Well, I think in our textbook materials we present an examination and analysis of values, so that a student could see that this kind of thing is being looked at. It's being investigated, but we're not imposing any values on anyone.

KRANZ: What happens if a child does end up disagreeing with the teacher? Does that mean that he or she gets the wrong answer on the test?

WRISLEY: I think the tests are constructed so that the concepts will show up, whether or not the student has made some progress towards reaching those particular concepts. And the tests are only used as just an indication of the student's understanding of those, not that the student is a "bad" person if he or she misses the question.

KRANZ: But if he or she had different values than the teacher, is it conceivable that he or she would miss the question?

WRISLEY: I don't think so.

KRANZ: Most of ERC's money, about sixty percent, comes from contributions of individuals, foundations and businesses. Founder George Baird says that the business community realizes that once the truth is told, no reasonable person could possibly disagree.

GEORGE BAIRD

BAIRD: Your parents taught you some values, whatever they might be. They did this probably because they thought they were "good." There are some things that are varities. For example, man does not flourish in a slave society. That's not really controversial in today's society, and so there are some real fundamental things that, if we don't teach, we're doing a disservice because our youngsters don't have the balance of understanding that freedom is desirable.

KRANZ: Baird warned the Twin Cities corporate executives at the luncheon not to be overly optimistic about students' vaunted trend towards conservatism. He says that a certain poll shows that most college juniors consider that they have a right to a job, and they hold other views which he called "dangerous to the business community." "But," Baird said, "the Educational Research Council and the number of schools that support it is growing." I'm Racheal Kranz.

BAIRD: Of that 49 million students, some 22 million of those students will spend at least one school hour in the average school day studying something that comes from the Educational Research

Council. I look forward to the time when we can test the idea. Give me a generation of children, and I will give you the future. The two people that have tested it most vigorously in our lifetimes have been Mr. Mussolini and Mr. Hitler. We in the free society haven't really tried to test that idea well. Perhaps we should.

MERROW: But most people, when they think about schools and values, probably don't think about the Educational Research Council or Professor Kolhberg. Take Kanawha County, West Virginia, for example. There, in 1974 one of the most violent, prolonged episodes erupted. And the issue was the school textbooks. The protesters, including School Board Member Alice Moore, said that the books downgraded their religion and taught "secular humanism." That is, that man, not God, is the highest being. Reporter Tom Burger of member station WVPB in Beckley, West Virginia, talked with Mrs. Moore.

ALICE MOORE

MOORE: If nothing else, traditionally in this country our moral system is Biblicly based, Judaeo-Christian morality, but what we're being faced with in the schools today is an entirely new approach to morality. In fact, it's a denial of morality as we have seen it in this country, and the approach is one of moral relativism, which means that there is nothing that we can look to with certainty to answer moral questions of right and wrong. It's a part of the philosophy of "secular humanism." And it's the thing that is causing all the controversy that exists in our schools today. Almost every controversial issue in public education today reverts back to influence of "secular humanism" in the last few years.

BURGER: Now, how can you associate this type of thinking, these philosophies with the public schools?

MOORE: There was a time when we had no controversy over the question of how to teach right and wrong, because we all agreed on what was moral and what was immoral. Even the person who lived an immoral life, recognized it as immoral, and didn't defend immoral behavior as being moral. He might take the attitude that he didn't care, that he'd be immoral anyway, but what has happened today is, that what was once looked upon as moral by all people is now being defended as different lifestyles, different value systems, and many of the teachers are coming out of the colleges with humanistic philosophies without even realizing maybe perhaps the full implications of their own philosophies. But they're coming back into the schools, and they're bringing this indoctrination into the schools, and it's not just through the teachers. It's coming through the textbooks in every area.

Now, it's because of this, we have come to the point where we have such two totally diverse philosophies of life. They are totally and completely opposed. There can be no compromise of the two. Because of this, I think we have reached the point that it's impossible for us to correctly teach morality in the schools.

MERROW: Alice Moore of the anti-textbook forces in Kanawha County, West Virginia. Tom Burger also talked with the Reverend James Lewis, a local Episcopal minister and a leader of the pro-textbook forces.

JAMES LEWIS

LEWIS: There were many times when I listened to some of the words that the anti-textbook people put forward about the public school system, and I would say, "My God, I feel just as disillusioned at times as you do about the school system, but taking books away from kids -- that's not the place to begin."

Part of the reason that we're in the jam that we're in, in terms of education, is because we don't know how to ask questions or have input into the system. And any kind of curriculum or any kind of textbook that would help us question and arrive at a set of values for ourselves that we could then act upon would be good. These textbooks, as hideous as many people thought they were, really were very sane. Throughout the controversy, the anti-textbook people took personal cracks at the credentials of the people that were writing them. As I saw it, if they began to look into the closets of all the writers, particularly in the English literature books, they would probably have to throw out three-quarters or more of great English and American writers for some skeleton that was in their closet. It got to be that kind of witch hunt.

BURGER: Should textbooks, should schools, be in the business of teaching values and value systems?

LEWIS: I'd have to say that it's impossible to teach without teaching values. The question isn't so much whether it should be taught, because it's going to be taught. I guess the question for me would be how is it going to be taught.

The classroom is a place where students are helped to develop their own set of ethics.

BURGER: There comes a time when there may be a conflict between what the society in general feels as correct values and those values of the parents. What happens when that occurs?

LEWIS: Well, I think the Kanawha County school book issue is an illustration of conflict of values. The difficulty is we were unable to talk with each other about it and clarify what those values were and try to find some way to work through them. There's a certain line which you don't cross.

BURGER: Is there a limit to the amount of change that can be implemented through schools?

LEWIS: I think we've looked at the schools to solve a lot of our problems. I've said that before in a number of contexts. I think we've looked to the schools to solve racial problems and problems of sex education, and all kinds of problems that I wish the adult world would be solving. I don't think, though, at the deepest level you can escape the fact that the school will mirror the larger society and that the problems of the larger society will find their way into the classroom.

MERROW: The Reverend James Lewis, a supporter of those controversial textbooks in Kanawha County, West Virginia. The textbooks are still in use, but with some restrictions. For example, for some books parental permission is required. If Kanawha County is one place that most people associate with controversy over values and morals, the hottest topic is sex.

ENSOR: What about sex education, another moral question -- do you think that sex education ought to start at a very young age and be in the schools or not?

TEACHER: Yes I do. And I think that in the schools now -- I know in Charleston they're doing a lot of sex education at the middle school level. I think in a lot of cases that's too late, because we have girls in the sixth and seventh grade that are pregnant. Plus, I think that the program is teaching the biological aspects of sex education and not the emotional aspects of it. And it's the emotional aspects that get you into trouble.

ENSOR: But it's also the emotional aspects that get you into trouble with some parents, who don't want that kind of thing in the schools. So, would you have it optional, or not?

TEACHER: No, I don't think so. I think that sex education is a part of biology, and I think that part of the problems are that parents have not gone through with their responsibility. Parents have done that in a lot of respects, as delegating their authority to the schools. Maybe it's a mistake, but it's reality.

MERROW: That teacher told Reporter David Ensor that sex education belongs in the school. Dr. Michael Kerera, Vice President of the American Association of Sex Educators, agrees. He talks with Reporter David Selvin.

MICHAEL KERERA

KERERA: My fantasy is that in every course and in every class that a young person takes, wherever appropriate, this material will be discussed. And I say that's a fantasy, because that really means that all the people who are the adults who are teaching will have enough comfort and confidence in it themselves to do this kind of a job.

SELVIN: What do you say to parents who say that the role of sex education belongs to them, and that they have a particular value system, and that conflicts with the value system that the children may be being taught in school.

KERERA: I support them in the sense that they do have the right, and that they are the prime sex educators of their children. And then, secondly, I would ask them to be a little bit more specific about what they mean, how the school program is interfering with their value system. One of the real problems in implementing programs in sex education really has to do with how aware the communities are of what sex education means. So, before you can go into a school and develop something, you really have to do a lot of grass-roots educating. Parents and administrators have to learn that sex education really isn't about position and technique, but it's about being a person.

SELVIN: You were talking before about your fantasy in sex education -- if that were implemented, that kind of a program where sexual education was a part of all the other education that people get, what kind of a difference do you think it would make?

KERERA: See, I think what happens is that I hear people talking about sexual morality, as if it's different than the morality that you should have or that I should have when I'm driving a car, or when I'm going shopping, or when I'm talking to another human being. There is no such thing as sexual morality. I mean, there's the morality of being a person, and that is, I'm not going to do something to exploit you as a human being, whether it's in a store or you're passing by me in a car. I think that those same kinds of codes have to exist in the area of sex.

SELVIN: I suspect there are some people who fear that this kind of sex education might turn this country into a nation of various kinds of sexual deviates. What do you say to that?

KERERA: Well, obviously, there's that fear. And that's why earlier I pointed out that it's very important for people to understand what sex education is all about, because if they do understand it, then they see that those issues of masturbation, homosexuality, and those acting-out kinds of things are only one very, very small part of a total program. Sure, there's discussion on that, but most of the discussion really has to do about decision making and learning some facts about your body, and so on. And that the narrow issue of the genitals is only very, very minor in this total picture. In my own experience working with young people, second graders - third graders - fourth graders, they do have a number of questions, and I have found much to my surprise that, unlike adults, if you give them what they ask for, it satisfies their need and they're not interested in going on. And if they want to know more, they'll ask you. So that when a person says to a parent, "Where did I come from," and that parent scurries into their room and brings out a book and shows the vagina and the penis and the birth process, and talks about how mommy and daddy love eachother and all that kind of stuff; and then they ask the child, "Is that okay, do you understand now?" And the child says, "Well, Johnny came from the Bronx, and I wanted to know where I came from," you find out that sometimes the energy and anxiety of the parent misses the whole point.

SELVIN: Are sex educators filling the void in the sense that a lot of parents may not have the information that they need to have?

KERERA: I think that sex educators many times are filling the void in the sense that parents do want to tell their children certain things about their bodies and about relationships and feelings, and so on, but just not having any practice in doing that, they're not equipped. They don't know what words to use. See, we are a sex-centered society, but at the same time, we're sex repressive. You know, we seem to be sex saturated, but sex avoiding. And that's a conflict, and I think that we have a long way to go, but I am very encouraged by the programs, the organizations, the willingness of people to admit that there are things that they want to know, and that the school is a safe and reasonable forum to get that information.

MERROW: Dr. Michael Kerera, Vice President of the American Association of Sex Educators, talking with Reporter David Selvin. If Kerera is right, and we are a sex-centered and sex-repressive society, then sex education in the schools is bound to be controversial.

That's certainly true in Scottsdale, Arizona. There, a film entitled "About Sex" was shown to high school juniors and seniors without being previewed by the teacher. Some Scottsdale parents are very angry about the film and about the school's approach to sex education. Reporter Gordon Helm of station KMCR in Phoenix spoke with Dr. Carolyn Guerster, parent and Chairman of the Board of the National Right to Life Movement.

CAROLYN GUERSTER

GUERSTER: I do feel that sex education in the public schools is weighted. It's weighted in the anti-life balance, and I think that what happens when they allow planned parenthood people to come in and speak, there's always -- and we've had people sit in on the audience and listen and record the presentation -- there's always behind this the selling of a product. They're selling abortion.

HELM: Dr. Guerster was commenting on the current aims of the education process in relation to sex education and abortion, and how that aim is depicted in the showing of the film about sex.

GUERSTER: Planned parent has become a surogate parent, and the very emphasis, for instance, in the film "All About Sex" which I think is most dangerous of all, even though we officially objected only to the section on abortion where the young woman says, "I've had two abortions, and they're safe, they're legal, they're lots of fun.' This is her message. But aside from that, I think the dangerous part of that film is the fact that it tells the youngsters, in essence, don't turn to your parents. Only you can decide when you're ready to have sex. And I think it's extremely injurious as far as the family unit is concerned, which has always been the strength of any nation.

HELM: Mr. Joe Davis is the Executive Director of the Planned Parenthood Organization in Phoenix, Arizona. I asked Mr. Davis about Planned Parenthood's role in the sex education of children.

JOE DAVIS

DAVIS: Planned Parenthood, since about 1968, has had young people, unmarried young people coming to it, and I mean people even under 18 years of age, coming and saying, "I'm sexually active, and will you help me prevent pregnancy?" And you know what we used to do? We used to turn them away. We said, "We can't help you." And it was tragic, because they always came back later pregnant, and then we were really in trouble and really had a hard time helping them. And so, Planned Parenthood does treat anybody that comes asking for help in contraceptive care.

HELM: Mr. Davis was then asked if Planned Parenthood attempted to give moral guidance to students.

DAVIS: Not at all. We don't act in a moral vacuum. We try to recognize the moral framework from which our patients and clients come, but we do not consider ourselves moral educators. Now, we have a clergy committee that advises us on moral matters, and on how to deal with moral issues. But we ourselves are not geared to functioning in that area. I might add that I've had a theological education. Our Director of Counseling is a Mennonite minister, and we're certainly not amoral or areligious. I think most of us

have some very definite ideas, but our job is not to do the religious educating. We agree with those parents who say that sex education ought to be done in the home. God love them. You know, they ought to be doing some sex education in the home. Unfortunately, they're failing miserably, because we see the patients coming to Planned Parenthood who are pregnant, or they are sexually active, and have no communication with their parents, or they've asked questions, and haven't gotten answers.

Our newspaper just recently did a survey of thousands of young people throughout the entire Phoenix Union High School District. Eighty-two percent of those youngsters said that they would rather receive their sex information and education at home than they would at school. And yet, they're not getting it. And we agree -- we wish parents could do it. We're trying to strengthen our education program to parents. Parents need some help in this area. Parents come to us often saying, "Give us some help." And by the way, films like "About Sex" have been checked out by parents and churches, as well as by school districts.

HELM: Dr. Philip Gates is the Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Educaton of the Scottsdale Public School System. Dr. Gates stated that the only complaint that the district had of the showing of the film was the instructors' not viewing the film prior to its release to students.

PHILIP GATES

GATES: Administratively, we felt that the first mistake was the fact that the film had not been previewed. We would expect a teacher showing a film for any class on any topic to have previewed it prior to showing it to his students. Now, as far as some of the members of the community were concerned, that was not their primary cause of distress. They were mainly concerned that the film that dealt with this subject matter in what they felt was a rather explicit way was shown at all, whether it had been previewed or not. So, we had two separate issues as I see it.

HELM: Dr. Gates agreed that the film was biased toward an abortion point of view.

GATES: If it didn't advocate it in a most outward fashion, it certainly strongly inferred it. I don't think Planned Parenthood is providing films of this quality. Now, when I'm talking about this quality - it was a film done in color. It lasts approximately thirty minutes. There was obviously an awful lot of money that had gone into preparing this film, whether you like the subject and the way it was dealt with or not. And I'm sure that in making this available at no cost to the school district and to any other group in the community that wanted to use it -- I understand they have more than one copy of it -- so, I'm assuming they're trying to get their word out, that very definitely they're advocating birth control.

HELM: Because of parental reaction to the way in which controversial material was taught to school children, the Scottsdale School Board appointed an advisory committee to clarify an already stringent school policy. Mr. Tom Trimble, a member of that board, commented about the proposed policy.

TOM TRIMBLE

TRIMBLE: I'd like to point out first of all that this committee did not attempt to make a list of subjects which it felt should or should not be discussed or taught in the classroom. This committee did not attempt to say that any particular subject should not be taught in the classroom. In terms of the work we did on this committee, we merely set up a policy by which the district and the principals could continue to know what was going on in the classroom and know ahead of time what was going on in the classroom, and try to guarantee that it was done in an educational and beneficial manner.

HELM: However, the question of teaching morality in schools is still unanswered. The Scottsdale Public School System is very responsive to the tax paying parents of that district. As such, the district may better reflect the attitudes and ideas of parents of school-age children and may also reflect the current trend of parental thought on sex education, abortion, and other controversial topics. Dr. Guerster of the National Right to Life Organization has a final view on what might be the outcome of the current trend.

CAROLYN GUERSTER

GUERSTER: The fact that teenagers are not happy with this responsibility is reflected in the ever-increasing rate of teenage suicides, which to me, is one of the most awesome -- it has gone up 250 percent in the last twenty years. It's now the second leading cause of death in the 15 to 24 age group.

HELM: Then, there's a significant amount of pressure applied to students because of the fact that they are more free in their choice?

GUERSTER: Yes, I think before they're ready for it. I've seen a lot of teenage girls in my practice because of my sex, and we don't take pediatric cases. We're strictly internal medicine, but we have the family-type practice in that my husband will have the father, and I'll have the mother; and as the children reach the teens where they abandon their pediatricians, I invariably will get the girls in the family, and my husband will get the teenage boys. So, I was figuring, I think, about twenty percent of teenage girls, and I'm really struck with the fact that these are not happy people. They have very often just about experienced everything by the time they're 16, and they're really disillusioned little old women at this age, and I think this is sad. We've taken away their childhood.

MERROW: That report on sex education in Scottsdale, Arizona came from Gordon Helm of member station KMCR in Phoenix. Sex education, and the larger issue of teaching morality, cause conflict everywhere. Reporter Cathy Lewis of station WBFO in Buffalo, New York talked with Helen Nunley, Supervisor of Curriculum Development, and Jan Dompkowski, a fourth grade teacher. They offer some final words on the dilemma.

HELEN NUNLEY

NUNLEY: Buffalo Board of Education policy is that we do not teach morals. In other words, this is the duty of the home and the church, because it is a public school system.

LEWIS: Well, how can you avoid -- how can a teacher avoid discussing morality?

NUNLEY: The teachers in the in-service are asked not to give their own moral viewpoint. This is not the job of a public school teacher.

LEWIS: Do you think that schools should teach right from wrong?

NUNLEY: When children are taught by one teacher and then another teacher, and the teachers have different sets of morals, I think we would confuse the student if the schools taught morals.

JAN DOMPKOWSKI

DOMPKOWSKI: What I try to do is separate what I believe with beliefs in general. And when you come to morality, I think that's what's important for teachers to help children to see. And I think if parents felt the teachers handled it that way, they would be less threatened. I don't think people are so concerned about teaching biology. I think it's when you get into the questions of abortion, of do you have sexual relations outside of marriage -- those kinds of things. And I think teachers do have to handle those questions, but hopefully, the way it would be done would be responsibly.

LEWIS: So, would you generalize that schools should teach right from wrong?

DOMPKOWSKI: Yes, definitely. I think we have to. And I think if we aren't teaching children right from wrong, helping them to judge what is right and what is wrong, then schools shouldn't exist. I think we should lock the doors.

STUDENT: Well, some people don't need or want a moral education, and I don't think it's the university's responsibility to provide this.

GUERSTER: I do feel that sex education in the public schools is weighted.

LEWIS: These textbooks, as hideous as many people thought they were, really were very sane. But there is something basic to the American experience that has its roots in religion.

MERROW: Material for this program came from Doug Drew, station WOUB, Athens, Ohio; Greg Fitzgerald and Andrea Sodano, WGBH, Boston; Tom Burger, WVPB, Beckley, West Virginia; Rachael Kranz, KSJN, St. Paul, Minnesota; Gordon Helm, KMCR, Phoenix, Arizona; and Cathy Lewis, WBFO, Buffalo, New York.

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(MUSIC)

MERROW: Is it ever right to steal?

WEBER: My personal belief is "no."

MERROW: OPTIONS IN EDUCATION is a co-production of the Institute for Educational Leadership of the George Washington University and National Public Radio. The program is produced by Jo Ellyn Rackleff. Production assistance by Joan Friedenberg. The Executive Producer is John Merrow.

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